

Molasses Flats (Postlewaite Building)  
200 Main Street  
Natchez  
Adams County  
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-192

HABS  
MISS,  
1-NATCH,  
28-

PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MOLASSES FLATS (Postlewaite Building)

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28-

Location: 200 Main Street, Natchez, Adams County  
Mississippi

Present Owner: J Wesley and Margaret Cooper (1975)

Present Occupant and Use: Cooper's Antiques

Significance: Molasses Flats is one of the earliest brick  
structures which has survived in Natchez.  
The handsome rubbed and gauged jack arches are  
a rare architectural feature in Mississippi.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: ca. 1796
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a partial and  
and incomplete chain of title to the land on which Molasses  
Flats stands. It is taken from the Adams County Landmarks  
Inventory, compiled by the Natchez Metropolitan Planning  
Commission.
  - 1793 October 25, 1793. Certificate A-547, American  
State Papers (Gales and Seaton Edition), Lot 2  
of Square No. 3 the City of Natchez: originally  
granted to William Dunbar by the Spanish Govern-  
ment October 25, 1793.
  - 1822 January 19, 1822. T/258. Samuel Postlethwaite  
from William Dunbar Heirs:
  - 1825 November 28, 1825, Probated, WB 1-p.348. Ann  
Dunbar Postlethwaite from Samuel Postlethwaite,  
deceased, in which all is devised to his wife.
  - 1826 April 8, 1826, P/152. Memorandum of a Partition  
of the Estate of the late William Dunbar, deceased,  
of the Forest made and concluded on the ...(above)  
day by the undersigned heirs and distributees.
  - 1832 April 18, 1832. T/212. Alfred Cochran from Ann  
D. Postlethwaite conveys "one half of a certain lot  
of ground with the buildings and improvements  
thereon situated on the corner of Main and Front  
Streets in Square No. 3...(which) formerly  
composed a portion of the Estate of Samuel  
Postlethwaite ... .

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- 1835 August 28, 1835: W/275. Christopher Dart from Alfred Cochran
- 1836 March 31, 1836: X/85. Commerical Bank of Natchez from Christopher Dark and wife: conveys "All that certain lot or parcel of ground situated ...in the City of Natchez, being part of Lot No. Two (No. 2) in Square No. 3...
- 1857 December 1, 1857: LL423. Alexander C. Ferguson, Reciever in the case of John Bacon et al vs. William Robertson, et al ...
- 1871 March 18, 1871: QQ/545. James O'Cavanagh, Administrator of the Estate of William Robertson, deceased, ...
- 1920 December 1, 1920: 4-H/284, Partition Deed. Mrs. Catherine B Surget to Mrs. Charlotte L. Surget McKittrick and Mrs. Charlotte L. Surget McKittrick to Mrs. Catherine B. Surget (mother and daughter).
- 1928 December 28, 1928: 4-0/93. Mrs. Catherine Boyd Surget to L. S. Stanton...
- 1946 July 8, 1946: 5N/450. Mrs. Joie Morrison Stanton to Burton Ketteringham and Mrs. Sadie Nix Ketteringham.
- 1971 April 10, 1971: 11-S/40. Mrs. Sadie Nix Inman to J. Wesley Cooper and Margaret Laub Cooper.

4. Original plans and construction: Molasses Flats is thought to have been designed originally as a pair of semi-detached townhouses. The interior of the structure has been so extensively altered that verification of its original shape is impossible.

5. Alterations and additions: Additions at the rear were added over a wide period of time. Display windows have been cut on the facade and side elevations.

B. Historical Context:

Molasses Flats was constructed by William Dunbar (1749-1810), a significant figure during the period when Mississippi was a territory. A summary of his major accomplishments would include: (1) He helped locate and survey part of the present

boundary line between Mississippi and Louisiana; (2) He was the first to manufacture cottonseed oil; (3) He invented the screw press for packing cotton and helped to perfect the process of packing it in square bales; (4) He made the first accurate meteorological observations in the Mississippi Valley; (5) He made a critical scientific study of the Mississippi River and its Delta; (6) He was the first to give a scientific account of the Hot Springs and an analysis of its water.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Molasses Flats is a good example of the simple buildings constructed in the late eighteenth century.
2. Condition of the fabric: Fair

### B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The rectangular building measures 56' by 48', numbers six bays and is two stories high.
2. Foundations: Brick
3. Walls: The masonry walls are load bearing.
4. Openings: There are three large doorways on the facade elevations which are topped by small jack arches. The doors are surrounded by paneled reveals, double-leaf, and glazed. The first floor has modern display windows. The second floor two-over-two glazed windows are also topped by jack arches.
5. Roof: The gabled roof is covered with tin. A simple, wooden cornice is fitted onto the front elevation only.

### C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans: The first floor is divided into three rooms. Two chambers occupy the southeastern half of the structure, and one large room takes up the remaining space.
2. Stairways: A single, original stair remains. This stair connects the second floor and the attic.
3. Openings: Several original six-paneled doors remain on the second floor.
4. Hardware: One original Carpenter lock remains.

D. Site:

Molasses Flats is placed directly upon the street and faces southeast.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Subject file. William Dunbar.

Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1891. Reprint. Wooster, Ohio: Micropublishers. Bell and Howell, 1973.

Rowland, Dunbar. Mississippi: Comprising Sketches of Counties, Towns, Events, Institutions, and Persons, Arranged In Cyclopedic Form. 3 vol. Atlanta: Southern Historical Publishing Association, 1907.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Project coordinated by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Elbert R. Hilliard, Director. Data compiled by William C. Allen, Architectural Historian, April 1975.

Edited by Marion K Schlefer, Historic American Buildings Survey, Washington, D. C. 1985.